We didn’t know guilt was listed in the nutritional label

scritto da Veronica Zin | 28 Aprile 2026



Circana’s latest foodservice analysis introduces the concept of “Liquid Revolution”, a shift toward out-of-home beverage consumption. One phrase caught our attention: “guilt-free.” This article challenges the growing food marketing narrative that turns eating and drinking into acts requiring atonement, arguing that a glass of wine or a mortadella sandwich is nourishment, culture, and pleasure, not a sin.

Circana’s analysis of the European and American foodservice market has recently landed in our newsroom. The research offers interesting food for thought regarding out-of-home consumption – at the expense of home consumption – and the decontextualisation of consumption moments: late morning,

brunch, and mid-afternoon, as opposed to the more traditional lunch and dinner.

The analysis also speaks of a “Liquid Revolution,” a phenomenon describing out-of-home consumption as almost exclusively focused on beverages, and, in particular, on “selected categories of drinks and snacks, especially those capable of combining functionality, balance, guilt-free gratification, and convenience.”

We’d like to draw attention to that “guilt-free.”

Before reading that phrase, the intention was to use Circana’s analysis as a starting point to find new sources and ideas, with the aim of writing an original article asking: can the Liquid Revolution have a positive impact on the wine sector too? After reading that “guilt-free,” however, the narrative trajectory shifted dramatically. **The real topic we want to address is this: food and beverages provide nutritional values, micronutrients, and macronutrients – in the case of wine, also history, tradition, culture, and so on – but they certainly don’t come with guilt.**

Have you ever found “guilt” on a nutritional label?

Courgettes: 0 out of 10; chocolate: 10 out of 10?

Food marketing has built a tailored communication strategy around this concept, one that has struck and sunk all those who, by consuming products that cause “no guilt” – because they’re sugar-free, dairy-free, egg-free… and also joy-free – feel more righteous, slimmer, more athletic, and perhaps even superior to those who, every now and then, enjoy a well-deserved mortadella sandwich, a beer with friends, or a glass of wine when they’re feeling fancy.

Yes, drinking mindfully matters. Yes, excessive consumption is harmful. Yes, eating foods that are low in nutrients and high in calories and fat every day is a bad idea. But a glass of

good wine, paired with a good dish or a snack during brunch, is not a transgression requiring redemption, and it’s not a treat to be allowed once in a blue moon just to keep guilt at bay.

It’s gratification. It’s culture. It’s life.

There is a growing narrative that tends to criminalise the pleasure of eating, turning it into something to be earned or atoned for. This logic, often passed off as health-consciousness, ends up doing more harm than good, because it fosters an unhealthy relationship with food and drink, one built on deprivation and compensation, remorse and relapse.

The body needs to be nourished well, of course. But it also needs to be gratified. And the gratification that comes from a good wine, a tasty meal, a moment of sharing around a table is not the enemy, it is an integral and fundamental part of wellbeing.

Long live the mortadella sandwiches after a mountain hike. And the bottles of wine shared with friends on a winter evening by the fireplace. And the birthday cakes with sparkling wine. And the tagliatelle al ragù. And the vin santo with cantucci.

You can be healthy and still enjoy all of this. Peacefully.

You don’t need to earn your Friday night pizza and wine and compensate by doing high-intensity exercise. Because, spoiler, once you fall into this unhealthy mindset, you can run a marathon and still feel guilty about a burger and fries, because they fall “outside” that norm built on deprivation… and sadness. (Then again, perhaps there are people who are genuinely happy eating plain unseasoned salad and chicken breast every day.)

To the WHO, which says wine causes cancer, that it’s poison, that it’s harmful, one could argue, paradoxically, that people fall far more ill from guilt than from a glass of wine enjoyed

with peace of mind.

And if we want to answer the question that originally prompted this article after reading Circana's analysis – *can the Liquid Revolution have a positive impact on the wine sector too?* – the answer is yes. But only if the sector avoids chasing a narrative that doesn't belong to it, and instead tells the truth about what wine really is: nourishment, pleasure, sharing. Without asking for permission.

Key points

1. **Circana's analysis identifies a Liquid Revolution** reshaping out-of-home food and beverage consumption habits.
2. **The phrase "guilt-free" in marketing reveals a damaging cultural attitude toward food and drink** pleasure.
3. **Food and beverages provide nutritional value**, guilt is never an ingredient listed on any label.
4. **Framing eating and drinking as transgression fosters unhealthy cycles of deprivation**, compensation, and remorse.
5. **Wine represents nourishment, culture, and sharing**, sectors should embrace this, not chase guilt-free trends.